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# HISTORY *of* LUTHERAN CHAPEL CONGREGATION

*Given In an Address by*

G. G. BLACKWELDER

ON HOME-COMING DAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1932



REV. C. E. RIDENHOUR, PASTOR



# HISTORY OF LUTHERAN CHAPEL CHURCH, GIVEN IN AN ADDRESS BY G. G. BLACKWELDER SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1932

In giving the history of the congregation it is necessary for us to go back into the past about one hundred and fifty-two years, to the time of the Revolutionary war, and try to get a mental picture of conditions in Rowan County at that time. When this section was not dotted with little towns, and painted farm buildings and various enterprises as it is today. There was no China Grove, no Landis, no Kannapolis. There were no railroads. Our country was not threaded with hard surface highways or sand clay roads in every direction. Even Salisbury, our county seat, was a very small village, probably smaller then, than China Grove or Landis is today. Even Charlotte, the metropolis of the Carolinas, was smaller then, than Salisbury. At that time Charlotte was considered a little hamlet. One would have to go two, three or four miles from one farm home to the next. This section of Rowan county was very sparsely settled by people who were of German stock, hence religiously, they were mostly German Lutherans and German Reforms.

Desiring to worship, they first began to assemble a mile to the east of here under the leadership of a German preacher by the name of Adolph Nussmen. Soon another man came into this section by the name of J. G. Arndt, primarily for the purpose of teaching. He being a very scholarly man and a good man and on account of the need of preachers he became an ordained minister. Under the leadership of these two men, these good people assembled and worshipped for a period of nine or ten years—1780-1790.

At this time the work was taken over by another German minister by the name of C. A. G. Stork. He served them from 1790

until 1820, a period of thirty years. This was a long time for a minister to serve a new congregation in a new country. It takes us over a very important period in the history of our country. It takes us through the Presidential administrations of Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Madison and James Monroe. Five presidents, each of whom served two terms, with the exception of one, John Adams. It covers the period of the second war with Great Britain—1812-15. It was also an important period in the history of our church.

During Rev. Stork's pastorate, or to be exact, 1799, same year as the death of ex-president Washington, this congregation purchased a tract of land of four acres from George Savitz for a consideration of five pounds. On this tract of land they built a church right where the old grave yard is, and painted it red and called it Savitz Church. We are told that a crazy man burned it down because he wanted it painted blue. But these good people were not discouraged. They built another and painted it red. This church served a period of thirty-five years or more. Rev. Stork served them until 1820, when the work was taken over by Rev. Daniel Shearer, who served them ten years—1820-1830.

During this time the Lutherans divided. One group identified themselves with the newly organized Tennessee Synod which had been organized in 1821. The other group remained with the North Carolina Synod, which had been organized in 1803. There were at this time three different groups of worshipers in the same church, the two groups of the Lutherans and the Reforms.

From 1830-1833, they were served by

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Rev. Jacob Keampher. From 1833-1837, they were under the leadership of Rev. Henry Graeber. During this period there were other important developments. The North Carolina Lutherans in 1834 adopted a charter or constitution. This charter consists of the preamble and ten articles. It was signed by eighty-three male members of the congregation. Assuming that this was the entire male membership of the congregation, there must have been a congregation at that time of something like one hundred and sixty-five or seventy members.

I will not undertake to read this charter, but it is easily read. The signatures on this charter indicate the family names that are common today, not only in the community, but in this congregation. We have the familiar names such as: Albright, Archer, Beaver, Blackwelder, Bost, Bostian, Deal, Garver, Miller, Pethel, Sloop, Winecoff, Wilhelm, and other names that are common in the community today.

The year following the adoption of the charter, 1835, another lot of two and one half acres was secured from Robert Linn for a consideration of thirty dollars. A frame church was erected on this lot, the same site where our church stands today. This building was forty feet by fifty feet. The church was named Luther's Chapel. Soon after this the Tennessee Lutherans went a mile west of here and built another church and called it Mt. Moriah. The Reforms continued to use the old church for a while, after which a lot was secured from Catherine Partee, upon which they built a church and called it Mt. Zion. So we see that from 1780 to 1835 the history of the Lutheran Chapel, Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion was the same.

From 1837-1854 the congregation was served by Rev. J. D. Scheck, a period of

seventeen years. This takes us over another important period in the history of our country. It takes us through the famous campaign of General Harrison, who was the fame of Tippy Canoe. Also through our war with Mexico, 1845-1848. At this time the slavery question was also being very much agitated. From 1854-1861, the congregation was served by Rev. Samuel Rothrock, Rev. B. C. Hall, and Rev. Wm. Artz. Each having served something like two years. In 1861, Rev. Whitson Kimball was called to serve the congregation. He served from 1861 until 1877, a period of sixteen years. This takes us through another important period in the history of our country. It covers the time of the Civil war and the days of reconstruction.

When these loyal people of iron nerve came home from the Civil war in '65, they found their homes decayed and their farms gone down. One of the first things they thought about was a house of worship. In this same year, 1865, they tore down the old frame building and began the erection of a new brick building, which was built in 1866 and dedicated soon after. Right here I wish to introduce a little bit of personal history. My father's family and Rev. Kimball's family being very intimate, Mrs. Kimball and my mother visited each other frequently. This bit of history I have from the words of my mother and I know it is correct. The last baby baptized in the old frame church was John Victor Blackwelder and the first baby baptized in the new brick church was William Luther Kimball (when Messrs. Blackwelder and Kimball were asked to stand and by the speaker were presented to the congregation, the speaker said that while there might be some doubt on the part of the young people that these men had ever been babies, they were once babies



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and from their looks had done quite a bit of crying.

Two weeks ago today, I had a conversation with Uncle Charlie Sloop. Uncle Charlie told me that when this church was being built, he slept on the church grounds for twenty-two nights.

I said, "Uncle Charlie, why did you do that, were you afraid some one would carry off the brick and mortar?"

Uncle Charlie said, "No, it was because it was too far, that it would take us nearly all day to make the trip here and back."

The means of transportation then were on horse back or wagon.

Succeeding Rev. Kimball was Rev. W. H. Cone, who served from 1877-1881. During Rev. Cone's pastorate in 1878, Center Grove congregation was organized and a church was built in the upper edge of Cabarrus County. Also in 1880, Grace congregation was organized and a church was built five miles north of here. Both of these congregations drew their members largely from Lutheran Chapel.

In 1881, Rev. B. S. Brown was called to serve this charge and served until 1887. Prior to this time Lutheran Chapel had no parsonage. Rev. Kimball owned and lived in his own home which was known for many years as the old white house. It served many years prior to his ownership as an inn or tavern. I wish to mention another incident indirectly connected with the history of the church. In 1822, James Overstreet, a South Carolina Congressman and a member of the seventeenth congress, while on his way home from Washington by stage coach, became ill and lodged in the old white house and there died. He was buried out here in the old church grave yard. Rev. Cone own-

ed a farm near here which was later owned by the Kirks. His home at this time was in the house now owned and occupied by Mr. Charlie Bost. During the pastorate of Rev. B. S. Brown from 1881-1887, there were two other important developments. In 1882, I. Frank Patterson gave a lot on which the congregation erected a parsonage which still stands and is serving today. However, the same has been improved since. Rev. B. S. Brown was the first pastor to occupy said parsonage. In 1885, a missionary, Rev. Swartz, came into the North Carolina Synod, and began to organize missionary societies among the ladies of the congregations. The first three societies organized were Lutheran Chapel, China Grove, St. John's, Salisbury, and St. James', Concord, N. C. I do not know definitely which of the three was organized first, but all were organized within a short period of time.

From 1887-1889, the congregation was served by Rev. J. L. Buck. I was confirmed by Rev. Buck. From 1889-1895, the congregation was served by Rev. C. A. Marks. During Rev. Marks' pastorate there were two important events. In 1892 our church was improved by the addition of the niche in the rear, the two rooms at the front of the church, the tower and a new roof. This work was done under contract by a man named Freeze from Salisbury, for a consideration of eighteen hundred dollars. In 1887, a Sunday School was organized in the town of China Grove. The outcome of which was the organization of a congregation and the building of a church in 1894. The church was named St. Marks in honor of Pastor Marks. From 1895-1907, Lutheran Chapel was served by Rev. J. Q. Wertz. Rev. Wertz served until he died, being the only pastor of the congregation whose services were terminated by death.

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Succeeding Rev. Wertz was Rev. C. A. Brown, who served from January the first, 1908, until 1925, a period of seventeen years. There are many young folks in the congregation who were baptized, catechized, and confirmed by Rev. Brown. Outstanding among the steps of progress during Rev. Brown's pastorate was the improvement of the parsonage and the adoption of the envelope system, which action revolutionized our financial affairs. Until this time we still practiced the old custom of taking subscriptions for the pastor's salary; mostly from the heads of the families, collecting what we could during the year, borrowing when necessary and making a final settlement with the pastor at the end of the year. If the pastor managed to get enough of the salary for a mere existence during the year and a final settlement at the end of the year in time to get a good Christmas dinner, he was lucky. Since the adoption of the envelope system, we have been able to pay the pastor promptly at the end of each month.

From 1925-1928, we were served by Rev. E. F. K. Roof. Rev. Roof was almost nicknamed "Old Dobbin" because he would pull anywhere. He was a good preacher, a good teacher, an excellent singer, and when the occasion demanded, he was perfectly at home on the stool at the piano. Then came Rev. C. E. Ridenhour, who has served us faithfully and efficiently from 1928 to the present time.

Those who have gone out as Sons of the Congregation into the ministry are: Rev. Crawford Sloop, R. W. Petrea, Wm. Ketchie, Luther Coburn, C. A. Rose, H. E. H. Sloop, J. A. Graham, and R. L. Patterson, D. D.

Those who have served as superintendents of our Sunday School since the Civil

war are: Simpson Patterson, R. W. Petrea, A. W. Sloop, J. A. Thom, J. D. Barrier, Allen Petrea, L. J. Ketchie, R. A. Smith, Rev. J. Q. Wertz, G. G. Blackwelder, J. W. Kimball, J. B. Speck, Herman Brown, Robert Davis, Wayne Patterson, James Patterson, W. A. Patterson, Vernon Blackwelder and T. F. Bostian.

I do not think that the history of our congregation would be complete without the history in rhyme which was composed and read to us here ten years ago by our deceased brother, Harvey Sloop, which gives the list of pastors down to and including Rev. C. A. Brown.

It was in seventeen hundred and ninety-nine  
The Reforms and Lutherans fell in line,  
Together they both did unite  
George Savitis gave to them a site.

He did a work noble and grand,  
When he deeded to them a tract of land,  
Over there where sleep our sainted dead,  
They built the church and painted it red.

But a crazy man thought it would not do,  
Because they did not paint it blue  
In his weak mind bad thoughts had grown  
When with fire burned the church down.

But the Lutherans and Reforms just went  
ahead,  
Built another church and they painted it  
red,  
In it the Lutherans and Reforms did thrive  
Until the year eighteen thirty-five.

When each church family so large had grown  
That they were able to have a church of  
their own.

But to give you the history and make it  
clearer,

Rev. Stork was succeeded by Rev. Shearer.

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And the time he served them in years was  
ten,

It was from eighteen twenty to thirty:  
then,

From eighteen thirty to thirty-three  
Rev. Keampher served them in history.

From thirty-three to thirty-seven  
The services of Rev. Graeber was given,  
He preached the Gospel, made its power  
felt,  
Until Lutheran Chapel's frame church was  
built.

They built the church here on this land,  
That was given by a member, Robert Linn,  
The frame church has now passed away.  
But it stood where stands our church today.

From thirty-seven to fifty-four,  
Rev. Scheck preached to them with effec-  
tive power.

And the years of fifty-four and five  
Rev. Rothrock taught them how to live.

From fifty-five to fifty-seven,  
The services of Rev. Hall were given.  
Rev. Artz served them until sixty-one,  
When Father Kimball's great work begun.

We find him with the fathers who were  
left alive,

Who came home from the war in sixty-five,  
Early in the summer of sixty-six,  
Making the mortar and moulding the brick.

And before the end of sixty-seven,  
A new brick church to us was given.  
And before the end of sixty-eight,  
This church to God they did dedicate.

I was by the Rev. Hall baptized,  
And by Rev. Kimball I was catechized.  
From sixty-one to seventy-seven,  
Kimball's faithful work was given.

From seventy-seven to eighty-one,  
We had the services of Rev. Cone.  
Then came the Rev. B. S. Brown  
Who urged us to build a pastor's home.

So the pastor and members they did unite,  
And I. Frank Patterson gave them a site,  
For us to build a parsonage on,  
In China Grove, our nearby town.

From eighty-one to eighty-seven,  
Brown's faithful work to us was given.  
From eighty-seven through eighty-nine,  
Rev. J. L. Buck kept us in line.

Then came the Rev. Charlie Marks,  
A man full of good deeds and works,  
Who gave his purse, his time, his hand,  
To help repair this church so grand.

Six years were served by Charlie Marks,  
Then came the Rev. J. Q. Wertz.  
From eighteen ninety-six to nineteen seven,  
His faithful work to us was given.

Time and again when he suffered with pain,  
He preached for us, made the gospel plain.  
He told us how to be forgiven,  
And how to receive a home in heaven.

And while serving us one August day,  
Our faithful pastor passed away,  
A faithful servant of Christ, the Lord,  
Who had died and gone to his reward.

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And when he laid his life's work down,  
We then called the Rev. C. A. Brown,  
On him we had not long to wait,  
For in January in nineteen hundred and  
eight,

He came to our parsonage in China Grove,  
Another pastor we dearly love.

*I wish to add that:*

Upon Rev. Roof, the work next fell,  
Who could preach, or teach and sing as  
well.

Then came Charles E. Ridenhour,  
Who is always on duty at the appointed  
hour.

He can comfort the aged, confirm the  
youth, baptize the babies,  
And reveal the truth.

